EDU 221

Spring 2013

Curriculum Instruction Assessment (CIA)

FIAE Reflections – Chapter 1 Abstract & Synthesis

Abstract:

The first chapter of *Fair Isn’t Always Equal* provides, as Tess so eloquently put it, “a definition of [Differentiated Instruction](http://aim.cast.org/learn/historyarchive/backgroundpapers/differentiated_instruction) and a defense of the use in a classroom.” The author, Rick Wormeli, achieves this by first providing an explanation of Differentiated Instruction (DI), and secondly, by addressing the concerns that have been raised about the DI model head on. Wormeli persuasively argues that, rather than making students’ work easier, Differentiated Instruction serves to make [student achievement](http://aim.cast.org/collaborate/knowledge/story) more attainable, while still being appropriately challenging. A teacher who adopts the differentiated instruction model may not seem like they are being equal in terms of assignments and assessments, but they are, in fact, doing what is fair to equally ensure student success. Moreover, it is the students who have been taught in a differentiated classroom who are better equipped for life in the real world. Differentiated Instruction does not teach them to be dependent, as some may claim; rather, it teaches them how to identify their needs, and to self-advocate.

Synthesis:

Overall, the most common theme throughout the group reflections was whether differentiated instruction was a crutch that encouraged student dependence, or whether it was a [tool](http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plans/free-lesson-plans/search?query=differentiated+instruction) to enable student success. Most of the class agreed that differentiated instruction offers teachers a means to, as Molly put it, “level [sic] the playing field so that everyone is learning the same amount, just differently.” Those with some apprehensions about the DI model mostly had reservations based on the concern that DI could be used incorrectly. Whether this be due to “obvious tactics” that would be noticed by the student in question, as noted by Alison, or whether our method of intervention would prevent the student from developing “their own tactics,” as suggested by Kaitlyn. Sean’s comment really gets to the core of differentiated instruction is all about – “No one learns the exact same way so therefore there can be no uniform way to properly teach everyone.”